

COMMENTARY : TO NICOCLES

1 - 8 PROOEMIUM : This has three subjects: the writer's special claims to the prince's attention; the worthiness and necessity of his subject, which is how a king should rule; and the definition of its scope. Having no literary model (8), Isoc. adapts the prooemium-topics of other oratorical genres, emphasising the difficulties inherent in the subject, from the points of view of both himself and Nicocles, and its importance. It is slightly longer than average compared with forensic proemia, perhaps because popular interest in monarchy had given rise to a number of generalisations about it (4-6), which found their natural place beside the other initial summary statements rather than within the detailed argument in the main part of the discourse. It has also been suggested (Eucken (1983) 216) that it is intended to introduce all three Cyprian discourses, not only To Nicocles.

1. **Nicocles...you kings**: The singular (δικοκλής), followed by the plural (also *monarchs* 8), indicates the wider audience which Isoc. envisaged for all his discourses. It is perhaps with this in mind that he refrains from mentioning that Nicocles is his pupil, which might seem to imply that the discourse was for his instruction alone.

garments or bronze or wrought gold: Apparently an echo of Homer *Od.* 13.136; 16.231. In these passages the recipient of these gifts was also a king - Odysseus - who received them from the Phaeacians on his departure for his own kingdom of Ithaca. Nicocles may have received Isoc.'s offering in similar circumstances, after completing his course at Isoc.'s school. A strong reminiscence of this sentiment is found in the letter with which Machiavelli introduces his book *The Prince* to Lorenzo de' Medici.

business transaction. . .guile. . . professional merchants: I.e. they are hoping for future material rewards. Two contrasts between Isoc. and other groups of men are present. The first, resembling that made in 4 *Paneg.* 1-2 between the superiority of the counsellor (himself) to the athlete in promoting the state's wellbeing, is a straightforward contrast between the value of (abstract) ideas and that of material things, by which Hdt., for example, frequently distinguishes Greek from barbarian attitudes, and which is central to Socratic and Cynic philosophy (Cf. also Job 28.18 "The price of wisdom is beyond rubies"). The second contrast is more subtle. The reference to the **guile** (τέχνη) of men **peddling their wares** suggests the Sophists, some of whom plied their trade like ordinary shopkeepers (Plato, *Soph.* 223c ff., the words themselves having a shady, disreputable sense; *Protag.* 313c), and were Isoc.'s professional opponents (See 13 *Ag. Soph. passim*, esp. 4 (ἐπώλουν)). By dwelling on the mercenary theme Isoc. is able to represent this discourse as a true 'gift'. But Nic. had already paid him for his teaching and given him other presents besides (15 *Antid.* 40); and still to come were the twenty talents Nic. was said to have paid him for this discourse ([Plut.] *Vit. X Or.* 838a; *Hypothesis to Ad Nic.* Dind. 108).

2. **appropriate for me to give and for you to receive**: As master to pupil: later, in 5 *Phil.* 72, as leading political thinker to leading statesman. *πρέπον* is linked

to *καίρος* in Isocrates (See esp. 13 *Ag. Soph* 13,16), and the notion of 'the appropriate time' fits the present context well, with Nic. beginning his reign.

men in private life...are trained in avoiding self-indulgence: Isoc. is thinking here not of the extremely poor, who might engage in crime from necessity ([Lysias] 7 *Sac.Ol.*14; Dem. 29 *Aphob.*22; Dover *GPM* 109, cf.112); and certainly not the richer private citizens, because their wealth made them prone to *hybris* (Lysias 24 *Inv.*18; 7 *Areop.*4; Dem. 21 *Meid.*181); but the solid middle stratum of society, who 'kept cities safe' (Eur. *Suppl* 244-245) by maintaining the *status quo*.

3. **the laws:** By referring to these and to freedom of speech Isoc. seems to be assuming that Nic. will rule his kingdom like a Greek city-state. Obedience to laws rather than the whims of a potentate were considered a distinguishing feature of Hellenic society after the fall of the tyrants (Hdt.3.80.6,7.102.1,104.4); indeed, freedom under the law was thought to lie at the root of civilisation (Dem. 23 *Aristoc.*139,141 ; 25 *Aristog.*20; 7 *Areop.*34).

friends to criticise: Cf. Dem. 23 *Aristoc.*134: "It is not the function of good friends to sanction what will bring injury to both parties, but to cooperate only in what will benefit both". Cf. Cic.*De Amic.* 13.44, 16.59.

certain poets...precepts...how to live: Homer, Hesiod and the gnomic poets named in 42, q.v.. The study of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* and Hesiod's *Theogony* as materials for moral education made them the primary targets of Plato's attack in the *Republic* (3. 377e ff.). See also *Paneg.*159 n.

4. **Kings...live out their lives without advice:** Hdt. notes the effect of this weakness on Xerxes' deliberations (7.10.1, 11.1; 8.67-69). Doubt that a king could be educated properly is expressed by Plato (*Gorg.* 470e), for whom education is a precondition of happiness (*εὐδαιμονία*). Jaeger (III 91) thinks that Isoc. is here alluding to that passage. In *Theaet.* 174e Plato gives lack of leisure and of a true perspective of the surrounding world as reasons for this. In *Soph.*230d-e, he says that anyone whose judgements are not subjected to scrutiny, *even the Great King*, remains uneducated (*ἀπαίδευτος*).

courtiers...to gain their favour: For the baseness of royal courtiers, see Hdt.3.80.4-5. In Xen.*Hiero* 6.3, the Sicilian tyrant complains that his only associates are not friends, but slaves, who feed him on insincere praise (1.15). Pindar, using the imagery of weaving, evokes the dangerous intrigue of the tyrant's court, but concludes that the plain-speaking man is the best (*προφέρει*) under any form of government (*Pyth.*2.82-88. Cf. Cic.*De Amic.* 15.52-55 for the absence of friendship from the courts of tyrants).

matter of general debate: The debate began during the earliest tyrannies. Archilochus was unimpressed (οὐ μοι μέλει...) by the wealth of Gyges (Frag.22 Campbell); Solon refused to become a tyrant (Frag.23); and Pindar condemned tyranny, preferring the 'middle way' (*Pyth.*11.52-53). See Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants* 23-26. In Xenophon *Hiero* (1.8), Hiero says that tyrants have far less enjoyment than citizens of moderate means and suffer more and greater pain. The idea that tyranny was as bad for the tyrant as for his subjects was also developed by Plato, esp. in the *Gorgias* 510-511, 522e,526a-b.

5. **honours...equals of the gods...fears and dangers:** Xenophon draws this contrast in detail in the *Hiero* (2), where the tyrant is made to point out that the pleasurable aspects of his life are manifest to all, whereas those which are disagreeable are hidden within his very soul (2.5). The maxim "uneasy lies the head

that wears the crown" applied in its strongest form to Greek tyrants, and the fact that the Athenian tyrant Pisistratus "died in his bed" (ἀπέθανε νοσήσας [Aristot.] *Ath. Pol.* 17.1) was a cause for remark.

forced to commit crimes against their nearest kin: Dynastic intrigue was the commonest cause of murders within royal families, and these were represented in mythology in the stories of the families of Atreus and Oedipus. In historical times, Hdt. tells of intrigues in the Persian court (3.61-87, 7.2-3, 9.109-113); the royal house of Macedon was so defiled on a number of occasions (Plato, *Gorg.* 471; Diod. Sic. 16.92.3-6; Justin 9.6.5), as was that of Jason of Pherae (Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.35); and Alexander's successors were no safer (Plut. *Life of Demetrius Poliorcetes* 3). According to Theopompus (Frag. 111 Ox. Pap.) Nicocles' father Euagoras was murdered by one of his eunuchs. Diod. Sic. 15.47.7 gives a false version which may contain an element of truth: he says that Euagoras was assassinated by the eunuch *Nicocles*. Perhaps he had read an account in which the eunuch was Nicocles' agent. For further examples and discussion of reasons for the instability of monarchies and tyrannies see Aristot. *Pol.* 5.10.

rule over all Asia: A reference to the choice offered to Paris by the goddess Hera (10 *Helen* 41) in return for his judgement in her favour.

6. **the office of king, like that of a priest:** The hereditary principle linked the two. Many states had priestly families (e.g. the Kerykes and Eumolpidae at Athens, and the Iamidæ at Elis). At Athens, the *archon basileus* exercised mainly priestly functions in historical times. See J.H. Oliver, *The Athenian Expounders of the Sacred and Ancestral Law* (Baltimore, 1950) ch.2.

I shall try to describe...: πειράσσομαι διελθεῖν: One of the standard transitional formulae in forensic oratory, expressing a certain modesty as prooemium gives way to narrative (e.g. [Lysias] 7. *Sac. Or.* 3; 12 *Ag. Eras.* 3).

7. **it is difficult to tell at the beginning:** Again (cf. 4 *Paneg.* 14, 187) Isoc. pretends that he does not know how his address will be received, with the implied reason that its content is as yet undetermined. (Expectations were aroused at the beginning of the work's composition and maintained until it was completed - ἀπὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς followed by ἐπιτελεσθέντα).

acquired a reputation far short of men's expectations: The difficulty of effective writing is one of Isoc.'s favourite topics (See 13 *Ag. Soph.* 14-17; 15 *Antid.* 187-191), understandably so since he taught literary composition.

8. **a neglected subject... advice to kings:** No comparable prose work antedates *To Nicocles.*, and with good reason: all previous prose authors were Athenian or Ionian, and to these in general monarchy and tyranny were anathema. Most of the early advice offered to potentates came from deferential court poets like Pindar and Bacchylides (but see Anaxarchides, *On Kingship* (Diels II 240)).

if he can turn those who rule over the masses towards virtue: Isoc. specialised in the training of leaders (cf. Cicero's comparison of his school with the Trojan horse, from which nothing emerged but princes (*meri principes* (*De Orat.* 2.22.94)), who, if imbued with the right qualities, could pass them on to the masses (4 *Paneg.* 75). This remark completes Isoc.'s justification of his undertaking (see synopsis of Prooemium (above)).

more moderate government: This takes account of the popular view (encouraged by oligarchs), that monarchies tended to be cruel and oppressive. Jaeger (III 92, trans. Hight) says: "the aim of Isocrates is ... to halt or hinder the

contemporary degeneration of the state from constitutional government to absolute monarchy, by binding the will of the ruler to higher moral standards". The problem of harshness or apparent harshness arises again in 23, cf. 3 *Nic.* 16-17, 32, 55. Though it is doubtful whether Nicocles or many other rulers heeded their philosophical advisers' calls for "milder government", perhaps some did. See Didymus, *Comm. on Dem. Phil.* 5.52 (Diels-Schubart), who says that Hermias, tyrant of Atarneus moderated his regime under the influence of Plato's pupils Xenocrates, Coriscus, Erastus and Aristotle, who was also tutor to Alexander the Great.

9 - 39: THE DUTIES AND QUALITIES OF A KING:: *Isoc. himself remarks on the disconnected arrangement of topics in this discourse (15 Antid. 68). After the initial general definition of the king's duty (9), topics are treated piecemeal under separately defined 'heads' or 'headings' (κεφάλαια, loc. cit.). For this technique, see Introd. 117-118.*

9. function of kings: For this meaning of ἔργον see Plato, *Gorg.* 517c.

under a general heading: This is characteristic of Isoc.'s method, cf. 8 *Peace* 18; 15 *Antid.* 217; *Ep.* 6.7-9. Both the sophists and the Socratics were interested in establishing definitions, both of words and of the scope of subjects under discussion. This is a different meaning of κεφάλαια from that in 15 *Antid.* 68 (see above).

to relieve the state when it is in difficulty, to guard it when it is prosperous, and to raise it from insignificance to greatness: This popular view of the monarch's function was too narrowly materialistic to satisfy Plato, who thought that the monarch should undertake the moral improvement of his subjects (*Rep.* 6 500d) (as should anyone, such as a politician (ρότωρ), who found himself in a position of power over the people (*Gorg.* 513e-514a, 515b-c; Jaeger III 156; Kehl 113)). Nevertheless, even in his scheme of things material wellbeing had a place, albeit subordinate: happiness (εὐδαιμονία) is linked to the growth of the city (αὐξανομένης τῆς πόλεως) in *Rep.* 4 421c. In the real world of the Athenian democracy the promotion of material prosperity was certainly a primary aim of politicians (e.g. *Plut. Themistocles* 2.3; *Cimon* 9.1), though the subject was debated from time to time (*Plut. Pericles* 12). In *Xen. Hiero* 5.4, the tyrant says that his subjects are more submissive when poor, so that his interest lay in keeping them in that condition.

10. superior to all others in mental powers: To be coupled with surpass others in virtue (11), thus combining psychological with physical, and potential with actual superiority. ἀρετή and even more its plural signify the active manifestation of good qualities. Isoc.'s ideal king follows the general Homeric model ("ever to be the best and superior to all others" (*Iliad* 6.208)), preserving its competitive element by his analogy (below) with the training of an athlete. But his insistence on the mental and moral dimension also aligns Isoc.'s model closely with that of Plato in the *Republic*, with certain historical leaders (Themistocles: *Thuc.* 1.138.3; Pericles: *Thuc.* 2.61.2, 65.8; Jason of Phrae: *Xen. Hell.* 6.1.15-16), and with the Athenian founder-hero Theseus as portrayed in his own *Helen* (31-37).

it has been demonstrated: δέδεικται (perfect passive indicative, of a past action resulting in a present state), does not necessarily refer to a specific source or authority (cf. 4 *Paneg.* 165), but here close verbal correspondence with 9 *Euag.* 41

suggests an interesting possibility: that although that discourse appeared after *To Nicocles*..., Isoc. had already applied his thesis to its subject in an early draft.

11. **no athlete...**: Cf. 5 *Paneg.*2; 1 *Demon.*12; 8.5. The ruler's struggle is the more demanding because it is unrelenting; and the rewards are not selfish but altruistic - the wellbeing of his subjects. R.Flacelière, 'L'éloge d'Isocrate à la fin du Phèdre', *Rev.Et.Gr.* 46 (1933) 224ff. sees Socratic influence in chs. 11-12.

surpass others in virtue: With two main aims: (1) to justify his pre-eminence, like a Homeric hero (see n. on 10 above); (2) to provide a model of ἀρετή for his subjects to imitate (*Xen.Ages.*10.2; cf.1 *Demon.*21).

12. **diligence...help ourselves towards virtue**: The question of whether virtue can be taught underlies this argument. Isoc. assumes that animals which are trained in accordance with the wisdom of their owners, who make them "more spirited, gentle or intelligent, as the case may be" (15 *Antid.* 211), become virtuous: therefore virtue can be taught. In *Rep.*6 493b-c Plato argues that 'taming' consists in finding what stimuli please or annoy the animal without considering whether its tastes were objectively 'good' or 'bad'. He examines the question of whether virtue can be taught in the *Meno*. Nothing in Xenophon's Socratic writings bears directly on this question (*pace* Norlin (I.47)). To Isoc., as a teacher, the question was of vital concern. Although he frequently criticises those who stray from practical matters into areas of abstraction, he strongly claimed that his own teaching instilled moral excellence. According to him (15 *Antid.* 276-277) the very acts of contemplating and appraising examples of virtue, and of writing discourses which are worthy of praise and honour, will lead a man to virtue. The argument is loose and fails to address fundamental questions, but relates clearly to the aims of the present discourse, and even more to the *Euagoras*, to Xenophon *Agesilaus*, and to the general purpose of biography as conceived by its earliest exponents.

13. **wisest...send abroad**: "Isocrates invites himself to Cyprus" (Jaeger III 96). His connection with the Cypriot royal family, which fostered cultural links with Athens (9. *Euag.*50), may have arisen through his pupil Timotheus, with whom he is said to have visited many cities ([Plut.] *Vit. X Or.*837c). It is not known whether Isoc. visited Cyprus.

poets or sages: See 3n., 43 n., and Marrou 126.

such training: this 'training of the soul' provides the king with the foundation for the second quality which Isoc. demands for kings, *philanthropia* for those loyal to him (15; see Kehl 113).

14. **worse...rule the better**: I.e. you must ensure that you are better than your subjects. The argument is amplified in 3 *Nicocles* 14-15, where Isoc. says that both oligarchy and democracy accord equality to all their rulers, be they the few or the whole of the male population; and that this benefits the 'bad' men. This is an extension of the objection made by oligarchs to democracy, e.g. in [Xen.] *Ath. Pol.* 1.4-6, where the 'best' and the 'good' are a superior class with higher intelligence and sense of duty than the masses. But Isoc. would argue, or make Nicocles argue, that because they are a plurality, the chance that an oligarchy would contain some bad men is greater than the possibility of vice in a monarch, when he has been trained by Isocrates. Aristotle (*Pol.* 3.10-11) puts the case for democracy with two main arguments: (1) that, while individually not as good as the 'best' men, each ordinary citizen has some share of goodness and intelligence, and when these are brought together they become, as it were, one composite man with many pairs of

feet and hands and many minds; (2) the larger the number of the disfranchised, the larger the hostile element and the consequent danger of unrest. Stability was achieved in the Athenian democracy, according to Isoc. (7 *Areop.*27), by the fact that it conferred executive powers upon the most capable men, but gave the people authority (κύριον ποιούσης) over them.

- 15.love his subjects and his country:** I.e.be concerned for the material prosperity of the citizens (see. 9 n.) and the maintenance of political stability. [Aristotle] *Ath. Pol.*16.2 uses φιλόανθρωπος to describe Pisistratus. See Rhodes *ad loc.* It is interesting that φιλανθρωπία later became an expected attribute of Hellenistic monarchs, some of whom used and paraded public largesse to strengthen their popularity, and encouraged the king-worship with which grateful subjects rewarded them, signalled by names like Saviour and Benefactor. See Tarn & Griffiths, *Hellenistic Civilisation* (London, 1927) 53-54; S. Lorenz, *De progressu notionis φιλανθρωπίας* (Leipzig,1914); F.Taeger, *Hermes* 65 (1937) 355-360, and *Charisma: Studien zur Geschichte des antiken Herrscherkultes* (1958) 123; Tromp de Ruyter, "φιλανθρωπία", *Mnemosyne* 59 (1937) 271ff. See also 4 *Paneg.*29, where the word is used in an international sense. Later Isoc. urges it upon Philip (5.114,116) and Timotheus (*Letter* 7.6).In Xenophon *Hiero*, the tyrant's love of his country is selfishly motivated: his own survival depended on it (5.3).

horses nor dogs nor men: The tone is decidedly paternalistic.

cultivate the people: Like his father Euagoras, whom Isoc. describes as δημοτικός (46). It was to this passage that he referred when answering charges of favouring monarchy over democracy (15 *Antid.* 70; [Zos.] *Vit.Isoc.*p.104. 23ff.). Aristotle noted that a tyrant's power often stemmed from popular support (*Pol.*5.10). He was contemporary with Isoc. and Nicocles, and may have been thinking particularly of contemporary tyrants. (So Andrewes, *The Greek Tyrants*, 18).

- 16.wise leader:** The qualification 'wise' is needed, as the δημάγωγος was not usually a 'good' leader in Isoc. (so Kehl 17) (an exception being *Helen* 37)).

the best shall have the honours: cf. 3 *Nic.*14, an idealised view compared with *Xen.Hiero* 5.1-2, where the tyrant complains that his retention of power depends upon the removal of all the best men. (Cf.*Eur.Ion* 627-8).

- 17.remove and replace them:** It was very difficult to change the law in Greek states. In Locris only one law was changed in 200 years. This is very understandable, as the Locrians compelled a would-be legislator or reformer to argue his case with a rope around his neck, and failure to convince the assembled Council of 1000 resulted in his immediate strangulation (*Dem.* 24 *Timocr.*139-40; cf. *Polyb.*12.16; *Diod. Sic.*12.17). Reluctance to change laws may have been due to their supposed divine origin, and praise of ancient laws was a rhetorical commonplace (*Antiph.* 5 *Her.*14, 6 *Chor.*2; *Aeschin.* 3 *Ag.Ctes.*11). But tyrants, by virtue of their absolute power, could alter ancestral laws, a fact deplored by their opponents (*Hdt.*3.80). See Bonner & Smith I 75 and n. on *Paneg.*78.

quickest possible reconciliations: Isoc. is perhaps thinking of the means of settlement available to Athenian litigants that fell short of a full trial, which they conventionally claimed to abhor (φιλόδικος was an uncomplimentary epithet (*Thuc.*1.77.1)). These included out-of-court settlement and arbitration. See MacDowell *LA* 203-211.

18.lawsuits detrimental: Isoc. implies elsewhere (15 *Antid.* 40) that Nic. was personally active in the dispensation of justice (ὥσπερ δεσπότης ἐδίκασεν). This completes the picture of a monarch who has a free hand in both the creation and the administration of the law. Isoc. sees this as an opportunity for Nic. to avoid the worst features of the Athenian system, which was bedevilled by slanderers and informers, whose activities increased litigation, and whose victim, ironically, Isoc. himself was soon to become. See J.O. Lofberg, *Sycophancy in Athens* (Chicago, 1917).

proper and expedient: For the interaction of the concepts of *πρέπον* and *συμφέρον* in Isoc., see Wersdörfer 27-35.

19.administer the state in the same way as your family estate: Note the use of the verb *οἰκεῖν*, which gives a more 'domestic' sense than *διοικεῖν*, the normal verb to denote public administration. *πράξις* meant both the collection of taxes and the expenditure of money; and by *ἀκριβῶς* Isoc. means the striking of an exact balance between the two, so that citizens were kept in contentment by not being overtaxed, while deriving enjoyment from public works and entertainments. Once again (see 15n.) Isoc.'s model kingship seems to foreshadow historical reality, as the principle that the king should administer his realm as if it were his own *οἶκος* was realised in Ptolemaic Egypt, where a central domestic bureaucracy was established (F.W. Walbank, *The Hellenistic World* 107ff.; W.Tarn & G.T.Griffith, *Hellenistic Civilisation* 187ff.). But the related, more repressive principle that the king owned everything and the people were his slaves is older, being the basis of Persian kingship; and the word *οἶκος* could be used to refer to his whole empire (Thuc.1.137.4). Xenophon seems to look forward with Isoc. rather than back with Thuc. when he makes the poet Simonides advise Hiero thus: "Regard your country as your estate (*οἶκον*), your citizens as companions, your friends as your children, your children as your very life; and try to prevail upon (*νικᾶν*) all these by benefaction" (*Hiero* 11.14).

Make a display of magnificence...immediately disappear: In view of Isoc.'s known disparagement of athletic contests and shows (4 *Paneg.* 1-2), it may be assumed that he is contrasting their ephemeral nature with the permanence of buildings and statues. There may also be an echo of Thuc.1.22.4 (*κτῆμά τε ἐς αἰὲν...*).

20.worship of the gods...make yourself as good and just as possible: Cf. 1 *Demon.* 13, where proof of piety is similarly seen in good behaviour rather than religious observance.

Honour with state office...your closest relatives: Nepotism is no more than an extension of the hereditary principle, which Aristotle regarded as natural and unavoidable in spite of the unworthiness of some heirs (*Pol.* 3.15; 5.10 *fin.*). Isoc. here shows his awareness of the possibility that the king's relatives will not always be the best men to help him govern.

21.bodyguard...friends: An armed entourage was characteristic of Greek tyrants (Hdt.1.64.1). The fact that it often consisted of foreign mercenaries was one reason for tyrants' unpopularity (Xen.*Hiero* 10.1; 10 *Helen* 37). For the sentiment cf. Sallust *Jug.* 10.4: non exercitus neque thesauri praesidia regni sunt, verum amici; Cic.*Pro Sulla* 19.51: tectus praesidio firmo amicorum; Tacitus *Hist.* 4.7: nullum maius boni instrumentum quam bonos amicos.

property...your resources...your wealth: This viewpoint arises naturally from 19 (the state as the king's *oikos*). Its placement here is an example of the loose structure of the discourse.

22.truth...mere words...oaths: Cf. 4 *Paneg.* 81 and n.

Render the city safe for all foreigners to visit: Isoc. is recommending the Athenian model to Nic. To the φιλοξενία of Periclean Athens (Thuc.2.39.1) is added reference to engagements (συμβόλαια), which suggest primarily agreements concerning trade and commerce. Athens was one of Nicocles' chief trading-partners.

those who expect to receive gifts from you: By honouring such men Nic. would place them in his debt, both morally and materially. Cf. Thuc.2.40.4; Sall. *Jug.* 6.5.

23.Relieve your citizens of most of their fears: Rather than '...their many fears' (Norlin); since it is desirable that wrongdoers should fear punishment (Xen.*Hiero* 8.9), that class of citizens should have some fears.

Do nothing in anger: The conventional view (Xen. *Hell.* 5.3.7, *Hippike* 6.13): anger has unpredictable consequences, and may lead to regret (Aristoph.*Ach.* 630,632; Thuc.3.42.1; Antiph. 5 *Her.* 71-72 and Edwards n. (p.110); Cic.*De Off.* 1.38).

appear to others to be doing so: Isoc.'s original contribution to the received wisdom reflects his rhetorical training. He is alluding to the orator's most potent weapon, according to the two greatest ancient orators, Demosthenes and Cicero - his delivery or performance on stage (ὑπόκρισις, Lat.*actio*) (Cic. *De Orat.* 3.56.213; [Plut.] *Vit.X Or.* 845b; Plut.*Demos.* 8; Quint.11.3.6). On the value of simulating anger: Cic.*Tusc.Disp.* 4.55: Oratorem vero irasci minime decet, simulare non dedecet; Seneca, *De Ira* 2.14: nunquam itaque iracundia admittenda est, aliquando simulanda, si segnes audientium animi concitandi sunt.

kindness: The idea of the benevolent monarch coexisted in 5th Century literature with the more popular one of the cruel tyrant (Aeschyl.*Ag.* 151; Pindar *Pyth.* 1.94-96). Here the quasi-forensic context of 'offences' and 'punishments' could point to oratorical usage, and specifically to the invocation of fellow-feeling (συγγνώμη), a frequent device in Attic speeches. Thus Isoc. may again be drawing on his rhetorical training.

24.inducing...to submit to your judgement: The ability to elicit willing obedience (πειθαρχία) was one of the most desirable qualities in a leader, according to Xenophon, who shared Isoc.'s interest in the subject of leadership, having had practical experience of it (*Hell.* 5.1.4, *Anab.* 1.9, *Hipparch.* 1.4,7,24, *Mem.* 3.3.9, etc.).

Be a man of war...a man of peace: The logical reaction to the knowledge that it is human nature to seize what is not defended (Thuc.1.69.1, 76.2; 4.61.5; J.de Romilly, *Thucydides and Athenian Imperialism* (trans.Thody)(Oxford,1963) 98-104). Later variations on the same idea include: "In pace ut sapiens aptarit idonea bello" (Horace *Satires* 2.2.111; "Qui desiderat pacem praeparet bellum" (Vegetius 3 Prol.); "To be prepared for war is the best way of preserving peace" (George Washington (1790)); and (variously quoted) "The condition upon which god hath given liberty to man is eternal vigilance" (J.P. Curran (1790)). ἵσθι is the present imperative 1st Person singular of εἶναι, "to be".

unjust aggression: πλεονεκτεῖν means "to gain a larger share". Crossing one's borders into another's territory could be justified only in self-defence or the defence of an ally (Hdt.3.21.2,4.119.2-4,5.49.2,8.22.1).

Conduct your relations with weaker states..stronger states..you: Cf.8 *On the Peace* 136. This may be a political adaptation of an earlier, more general "do as you would be done by" aphorism. Cf. 1 *Demon*. 14 (children-parents). But it directly contradicts the current sophistic idea that "justice is the will of the stronger" (4 *Paneg.*81 n.).

- 25.**noble-hearted:** μεγαλοφροσύνη (Cf. 9 *Euag.*27) always contains the idea of self-esteem. Isoc. seems to think that a king should be more cautious in both word and deed (cf. 33 n.) than a man of letters like himself, who, in the *Panegyricus*, undertook a subject which, on his own admission, defeated him in the end (187). The theme of this and the next chapter is moderation.

Up to this point the subject-matter has been strictly political (so Blass II 273). Isoc. now turns to the king's private conduct (27-32). The loose structure of the discourse becomes clear as earlier material is added to (see 27).

- 27.**friendship...worthy of you:** I.e. cultivate those who match your qualities. Cf.*Eur.Hipp.* 614: "No dishonest man is a friend of mine"; *Cic.De Amic.* 9.26 argues that true friendship arises between men of similar nature and character, when each perceives his own virtues in the other. ὁ βουλόμενος - 'all and sundry', Lat. *quivis*.

examinations: δοκιμασίας: The word for the scrutinies which Athenian candidates for state office underwent, and therefore appropriately applied to men who were to assume state office under the monarch. As before, Isoc. is urging the Athenian model upon Nicocles.

like your companions: This assumption ("birds of a feather...") was used against defendants in lawsuits to blacken their characters (*Lysias* 24 *In v.*19-20).

The problem faced by a monarch in his choice of friends is well presented by Xenophon in the *Hiero* (3), where he makes the tyrant complain that, whereas ordinary people enjoy friendships in their family life, the tyrant's worst enemies are often jealous members of his family (3.7-8); while he is deprived of the friends who are best able to advise him by the necessity to eliminate the ablest citizens, who pose the greatest threat to his position (5.1-2). Isoc. seems to be following the conventional view of friendship as self-interested rather than altruistic. Even in *Thuc.*2.40.4, where Pericles is arguing that the Athenian view of it is more enlightened than that of other Greeks, the purpose of friendship is still to place others under an obligation to help you in time of need. This is what friends are for (*Eur.Or.* 665-666; *Menander Dysc.*774).

- 28.**criticise your mistakes:** See 3n.; and *Dover,GPM* 304-305. Even Xerxes, whose advisers feared his anger if they dissented, valued the frank advice of Artemisia not to fight at Salamis (Hdt.8.69.2). *Cic.De Amic.* 13.44 says that a friend should give advice and warning freely, and expect it to be acted upon.

free expression: παρησία had both a public sense, meaning "freedom to air one's opinion", and a personal sense, "frankness" with one's friends and intimates. Historically, tyrants tended to suppress the former (*Aristot. Pol.*5.11), Pisistratus at Athens being an exception ([*Aristot.*] *Ath.Pol.*16.6). Regarding the latter, Aristotle

(*loc.cit.*) describes how tyrants created an atmosphere of suspicion in their courts which was not conducive to frankness on the part of their intimates. But Aristotle is describing the evils of tyranny, whereas Isoc. is portraying ideal monarchy.

flatter: A king was surrounded by flatterers: the conventional tyrant was thought to prefer them (Aristot.*loc.cit.*).

craftily: Wersdörfer (108) notes that τέχνη is closely associated in Isoc. with κομψός ('polished') and ποικίλος ('varied'), particularly in the context of style. Hence the reference may be to their form of address.

- 29.**false accusers:** Isoc. opposes the traditional methods of tyrants, who encouraged slander in order to set citizens against one another and so divide the opposition to himself (Aristot.*loc.cit.*). He is also probably thinking of the damage done in Athens by slander-mongers.

Govern yourself...slave to no pleasures: The Socratic model of self-control (ἐγκράτεια) (Xen.*Mem.*1.2; Plato, *Phaedrus* 256b). As a quality desirable in leaders: Xen. *Hell.*6.1.16; *Ages.*5; Seneca 113: *imperare sibi maximum imperium est*. Jaeger, *Paideia* II 53.

your desires: These are specified as sexual ("...for women and boys") in 3 *Nic.*39.

- 31.**σωφροσύνη** had a more general meaning than ἐγκράτεια, including both it and integrity, honesty and wisdom. See Dover *GPM* 65-69.

example...modelled on that of its rulers: Whereas Plato seeks an absolute model or example (παράδειγμα) of, or rather for, the ideal ruler, Isoc. thinks that the model should be a person, who becomes both his people's educator and the embodiment of their culture.

- 32.**good name...great wealth:** Cf. 3 *Nic.*50. The superiority of δόξα over material things was a commonplace of epideictic oratory, especially funeral speeches, where, as here, its immortality is stressed ([Lysias] 2 *Epitaph.* 24,33; 4 *Paneg.*91,186). It also found expression in political oratory, especially that of Demosthenes, who frequently said that Athens cared, or should care, more for her good name and the honour it brought than for wealth (1 *Olynth.*I 11; 6 *Phil.*II 8; 18 *Cor.*63-7,80,89,97-101,199-205,207,322, 19 *Leg.*83, 20 *Lept.*10).

- 33.**choose your words...with care:** Isoc.'s own teaching of the prince would have dealt with this subject in detail. With his future career in view, he probably received special tuition.

Precise moment of opportunity: Καίρως. For the importance of this concept in Isocratean thought, see *Paneg.* notes on 9 and 160, and Gen. *Introd.*n.36. For its importance as a rhetorical concept (the right moment in a speech, the right measure of emphasis and coverage given to a topic), see *Paneg.*5 n. It is likely that Isoc. is talking about oratorical style, or at least including it by implication.

choose to fall short rather than to overstep them: For a similar counsel of caution, cf.25 n. and 26. Once again *Nic.*'s style of speech and subject-matter may be in the forefront of Isoc.'s mind. Cicero makes a similar recommendation regarding style in *Orator* 22.73. Men in political life were personally aware of the dangers of oratorical excesses. Critics, on the other hand, delighted in the flights of genius which overstepped the boundaries of convention but enriched literature ([Longinus] *On the Sublime* 33-36; Plato, *Rep.*6 497d; Dion.Hal.*Ep. ad Gn.Pomp.*2 *sub.fin.*).

- 34.**polite:** ἀστειός ranges in meaning between 'polite' through 'urbane' to 'witty'.(The word's application to style in the latter sense (Aristot.*Rhet.*3.10) does not fit the present context.) Isoc.'s ideal prince is on easy speaking terms with his

subjects, like the tyrant Pisistratus, who conversed with ordinary farmers ([Aristot.] *Ath. Pol.* 16.6. Further on ἀστέιος see Dover *GPM* 13.

35. experience...theoretical study: In accordance with the regimen laid down for all his pupils by Isoc. (13 *Ag. Soph.* 14, 15 *Antid.* 191).

Observe the experiences and misfortunes...: Isoc. probably means both those which Nic. sees or hears about in his own day-to-day life, and those which he reads about, especially perhaps in the writings of historians. See next note.

past events...the future: This certainly recalls Thucydides, who says that past events may provide a guide to the future κατὰ τὸ ἀνθρώπινον (1.22.4). Cf. 6 *Archid.* 59. Reference to misfortunes suggests the more popular type of history written by Herodotus. Marrou 126 thinks Isoc. is alluding to both. See also Jaeger III 101 and Hudson-Williams (1948) 81.

36. die nobly rather than live in ignominy: The eternal heroic choice begins with Achilles (Homer *Iliad* 9.410-416); the nobler option was commended to patriotic citizens from the Persian Wars onward (Hdt. 8.83; Aeschyl. *Frag.* 395; [Lysias] 2 *Epitaph.* 79; Plato *Menex.* 246d; Xen. *Lac. Pol.* 9.1, *Apol.* 9, *Anab.* 2.2.3, *Hell.* 4.4.6; Isoc. 6 *Archid.* 8; Lycurg. *Leocr.* 86; Dem. 18 *De Cor.* 205).

37. mortal body...immortal memorial of your spirit: An epideictic commonplace (*Gorgias Epitaph.*; 5 *Phil.* 134; [Lysias] 2 *Epitaph.*;... 24; Hyperid. 6 *Epitaph.*;... 24; [Dem.] 60 *Epitaph.*;... 24). It does not necessarily imply that the ψυχὴ is immortal, but that the body can be worn out or overcome (see 4 *Paneg.* 4) whereas the spirit of brave men is perceived to be unconquerable when they die fighting, and so deserves a worthy memorial.

38. When you practise speaking, choose noble subjects, so that you may form the habit of thinking thoughts which match your words: Isoc. amplifies this idea in 15 *Antid.* 277. Its importance is hard to overstress, as it embodies the main defence of his paideia. It is his answer both to Plato, who claimed that rhetoric without a moral basis is dangerous, destructive and tyrannical, and to the Sophists, whom both Isoc. and Plato accused of using rhetoric for base or trivial purposes. See next note, and *Introd.*

39. Regard as wise not those who argue pedantically about small matters: Isoc. accuses both Plato and the Sophists of this (10 *Helen* 1-5). His attitude is similar to that given by Plato in *Gorgias* 484c - 485e to Callicles, who argues, like Isoc. (15 *Antid.* 266-268, 12 *Panath.* 27), that exercises in dialectic are useful, or at worst harmless in the education of the young; but that prolongation of this training is ruinous, since it keeps them away from serious subjects. These passages particularise the rivalry between Isoc.'s school and the Academy (Jaeger III 55). The present passage shows that this rivalry was still alive, at least on Isoc.'s side, some fifteen years after the two schools were founded (c.390-375 B.C.).

are conversant with both affairs and men: ὁμιλεῖν here suggests diplomatic skills. In his brief obituary note on Philip II of Macedon, Diodorus (16.95.2) remarks that he was said to have been prouder of his diplomatic successes and his strategic abilities than of his valour in battle. See Kehl 111, 156.

not perturbed by life's changes of fortune...: Cf. 12 *Panath.* 30-31, where such equanimity is attributed to 'being educated' (παιδευμένοι). Also 1 *Demon.* 42.

This central section (9-39) ends in a longer sentence than average for this discourse, as do the opening chapters and the sub-section ending in 26.

40 - 53 : THE KING AND LITERARY COUNSEL : *As an author and teacher himself, Isoc. turns frequently to discussions of the literary problems relating to the work he has in hand (e.g. 9 Euag.8-11; 4 Paneg.7-14,187; 12 Panath.200ff.). In the present section he affirms the value of serious literature as a source of advice for rulers, and warns Nicocles against wasting time on literature which merely pleases and entertains.*

41. **But in discourses such as this one should not seek novelties...form:** The fact that his subject-matter has been treated before (40) might tempt an author with Isoc.'s talents to try to revitalise it by presenting it in a novel style (4 *Paneg.*8-9). This temptation should be resisted in a protreptic discourse like *To Nicocles*, in which the writer's aim should not be to entertain his audience with extravagant stylistic effects (...say anything paradoxical or incredible), but to convey the distilled wisdom of his most able predecessors clearly and elegantly. The subject-matter should rule the form. See Wersdörfer 37. Further on *καίνον* in Isoc., see *Introd.* and Wersdörfer 38-43, who establishes that its main stylistic use is in epideictic oratory.
42. **No; they feel the same as they do towards people who admonish them:** See 3n.,28n. Isoc. writes both as a teacher and as an author who feels that his work in both fields is not properly appreciated. See *Introd.*
43. **Hesiod and Theognis and Phocylides ...best counsellors for human conduct:** The study of the poets was an important part of Greek education, and is treated in all the books on the subject. See F.A.G. Beck, *Greek Education* 450-350 B.C (London,1964). Pupils memorised long passages of Homer and Hesiod (*Aeschin.* 3 *Ag. Ctes.* 135). See also Baynes (1955) 149; Kehl 113.
men choose to spend their time studying one another's follies...: The discussion is still about literature, and the relative popularity of different forms. Human folly is of course pre-eminently the subject of comedy, and this is soon named (44). But tragic drama is also concerned with it in varying degrees. Tragedy and comedy, spectacularly performed at festivals, were certainly more popular than epic and didactic poetry, with their schoolroom associations. Another form of literature fits the above description: forensic oratory, which is undoubtedly concerned with human folly almost as often as with human wickedness. Isoc. was deeply unhappy that it was read for pleasure in preference to what he considered worthier literature (4 *Paneg.*11).
44. **the most worthless comedy:** In 8 *On the Peace* 14, Isoc. complains of the licence enjoyed by comic poets. Both he and his father suffered at their hands ([Plut.] *Vit.X. Or.*836e; [Zos.] *Vit.Isoc.* p.102.19-20 Dind.; Philostr. *Vit. Soph.* 214 Kayser). He was fortunate to have escaped the most wounding barbs of Aristophanes in his prime, but his style, both personal and literary, invited caricature.
45. **human nature:** Isoc.'s pessimism resembles that of the gnomic poets (e.g. Theogn. 39-52 (on the greed and selfishness of those in power)). For the idea that men choose the easier course of pleasure rather than the harder one of duty, see Hesiod, *Works and Days* 287-292; Dem. 8 *Chers.*72. For Isoc.'s development of this idea, see next note.

most healthy...noblest...best... most beneficial: Expedient (a) and just or honourable (b), qualities presented chiasmatically (a - b:b - a). Isoc.'s treatment of the imaginary dilemma facing men and heroes differs from Prodicus' *Choice of Heracles* (Xen.*Mem.*2.1.21ff.) in the emphasis he places on the self-interest of the person making the choice (contrary to their best interests). This is in tune with the general pessimism of the passage. Men are not only indifferent to honour and justice, but also foolish from their own selfish point of view. He is talking primarily about men in public life, whose pursuit of what is superficially pleasurable to them can be ruinous to the state.

46. Four of the character-types of bad citizen described by Thucydides and the Attic Orators may be recognised in this chapter: the anti-intellectual type, which includes those who **resent men of wisdom**, would have followed the reasoning of Cleon rather than that of Diodotus (Thuc.3.37-48) if they equated wisdom with cleverness; the gullible type, who regards as **sincere men who lack sense**, and is consequently an easy dupe of shallow but plausible demagogues (like Cleon (Thuc.4.21.3)), whose blandishments he prefers to the realities of life; the busybody (**problems...of other people**), a type which has various facets, mostly bad (Lysias 1 *Caed.* Erat.16; 24 *Inv.* 24) including litigiousness and general quarrelsomeness (see 47); and finally the voluptuary, who **prefers suffering discomfort** as a consequence of his excesses (assuming that τῷ σώματι κακοπαθῆσαι (46) refers to τὰς ἡδονὰς (45)), to self-discipline and performing his duties as a citizen. (Cf. Xen.*Oec.*1.20, who says that pleasures lead to pain and prevent the sufferer from performing useful duties).

47. **In company:** To complete his portrayal of the worst characteristics of citizens in a democracy, Isoc. turns to their corporate behaviour. Athenian Assemblies could be noisy and disorderly (e.g. Xen.*Hell.*1.7.12-15; Lys.12 *Ag.Eratos.*73-74). συνουσίαι could of course mean gatherings for purely social purposes, but the context suggests political meetings.

48. **poetry or prose ... please the masses ... romantic ... fictions ... games and contests:** The terms of this conflict between popular taste and the task of the writer who deals in facts and ideas are clearly stated by Thucydides. In 1.21.1, after stressing the difficulty of discovering the truth even about recent events, he contrasts his attempts to find it with the purpose of certain unnamed poets and prose-writers merely to tell an attractive story. In 1.22.4 he says that his history will disappoint readers who want only an agreeable tale (τὸ μὴ μυθῶδες αὐτῶν ἀτερπέστερον φανέσθαι). Thucydides' attitude to Homer is not that of a rival for public attention, but of a different kind of writer with different aims and methods. Being a poet, Homer naturally exaggerates (1.10.3), and consequently is liable to distort the truth (2.41.4). Isocrates' position is related to that of Thucydides, in that both wish to tell the truth and give useful instruction, and both are aware that popular audiences like to be entertained rather than educated. Thucydides' attitude to what he sees as a human weakness is uncompromising: he is critical of audiences who treat debates like verbal gladiatorial contests (3.38.3-4, 40.3), and claims to make no concessions to popular taste. But Isocrates expresses admiration for Homer and the earliest tragedians for their ingenuity, while also envying the literary licence which they enjoyed (9 *Euag.*9-11).

49. **audience...spectators:** Music and choral dancing were major features of drama, especially the earliest tragic plays; and *opsis* ('spectacle') is one of the six elements

of drama in Aristotle *Poetics*. Epic and lyric poetry were also recited by professional rhapsodes with especial attention to visual effects, which could be overwhelming on both performers and audience (Plato *Ion* 535b-e; See R.M. Harriott, *Poetry and Criticism before Plato* (London, 1969) 121-129).

models...those who wish to attract audiences: Since a model invites imitation, Isoc. seems to be expressing a more accommodating attitude to popular taste than Thucydides, and this is confirmed elsewhere. See esp. 4 *Paneg.* 8-9, where his statement that rhetoric can breath new life into old subject-matter suggests a greater interest in form than in content. He also thought that embellishment of the written word is an aid to learning, and even a source of moral edification (15 *Antid.* 275-277). Finally, his use of the verb *ψυχαγωγεῖν* recalls Plato, who used it to describe the seductive effect of rhetoric (*Phaedrus*, 271c-d, *Menex.* 234c-235a (See Wersdörfer 112)).

50. **you...king...should not share the mentality of other men:** Earlier in the discourse Isoc. has reminded Nicocles of his unique position: his isolation (4), the demanding nature of his office (6), his need to be superior in intelligence (10) and virtue (11) to his subjects. Now he is saying that this unique position demands a discourse in a style which answers the need for advice given in a concentrated form (cf. 41).

51. **wiser through disputation:** ἐριστικοὶ λόγοι or ἔριδες were contrived arguments presenting a case from different points of view. After he had established his school, Isoc. conceded that they were useful as a means of training the young (15 *Antid.* 261, 12 *Panath.* 26), but only as a preparation for the more serious 'philosophy' which he offered (15 *Antid.* 265ff.) Earlier (13 *Ag. Soph.*) he attacked the 'eristics' vigorously (2-6) for claiming to teach ethics, and even political science (10 *Helen* 9). Disputation was a component of sophistic teaching from its inception, and Protagoras was said to have taught it (Seneca *Ep.* 88.43; Diog. Laert. 9.51; Stephanus s.v. Ἀβδηρα).

political discourse: This is what Isoc. taught his pupils. The main subject on which they discoursed was both practical and important: the Greek world (15 *Antid.* 46). He also taught them to write in a style that matched the nobility of the subject (12 *Panath.* 2; Dion. Hal. *Isoc. passim*) and satisfied the same aesthetic demands in his audience as the finest poetry (15 *Antid.* 47).

give reasoned counsel: Isoc.'s pupils included many future politicians and generals. See Steidle (1952) 261.

52. **agreed principles...particular occasions:** Isoc. is reminding Nicocles of the methods of deliberation that he has taught him. On *καίρός* see 33 and refs.

53. **good adviser...understanding:** Returning to one of the topics with which he began (2). See Eucken 216.

54 : EPILOGOS

54. **recall what I said at the beginning...presents ...gifts:** This final chapter balances the first paragraph (...διοικότης)(2) (Blass *AB II* 194-195, who notes other correspondences in the discourse: 2-6 with 42-53; 6-8 with 40-41). But there is no real summary (ἀνακεφαλαιώσεις), as the handbooks recommend for epilogues (Anaximenes *Rhet. ad Alex.* 20 1433b; *Ad Herenn.* 2.30.47; Cic. *Part. Or.* 17.59;

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Quint.6.1.2.). Elsewhere Isoc. uses true ἀνακεφαλαίωσις (e.g. 5 *Phil.*154), but here he maintains novelty of form to the end.